

**TT No.59: *Dean McClean*** - Sat 15th Sept 2007. Lancs FA Amateur Cup 1st Rd: **Horwich Victoria** v Marsh Utd; Res: 1-4; Admission/Programme: None; Att: 20; FGIF Match Rating: 3\*.

The Lancashire Amateur Cup brings together an eclectic mix of teams from around the county for this keenly contested cup. And today was no different, as the Lancs Amateur League met the North Lancs District League in the form of Horwich Victoria and Marsh United respectively.

After much thoughtful deliberation, I opted for this tie, although there were a few others I was particularly keen on. Technically, the home side are two divisions above their counterparts from Lancaster, so this promised to be an interesting tie.

Horwich Vics play at the small athletics stadium behind the Bolton Arena and in the shadow of Bolton Wanderers' Reebok Stadium. Conveniently located next to Horwich Parkway railway station, this ground was ideal for a trip on the train. Located in the midst of the soulless Middlebrook retail park, or whatever they are called these days, it doesn't promise much. But to be honest looking from the Western side of the ground, a small woodland area can be seen behind the goal and on the opposite side a good view of Winter Hill and the ever-increasing sprawl of Horwich, as it crawls further and further into the hillside.

No admission or even a raffle is on offer, so the club must rely on sponsorship and subs from players, in the true honourable amateur fashion, for its income. Inside or outside the ground, there is no mention that this is the home of Horwich Victoria. For the uneducated, they could be anyone.

Playing a team who are technically two divisions above, the last thing you need is to be 2-0 down inside 7 minutes, as Marsh had the game as good as won by then. The ball possession was fairly even but the visitors were more clinical in the final third and despite giving it everything, Horwich were always struggling after such a bad start. Another two goals, one at the end of each half, gave Marsh a fairly comfortable win and safe passage into the next round. Overall, a good, wholehearted game of football played in the right spirit and refereed efficiently. It's so refreshing to see players respecting the referee, unlike some players we all know about in the Premier League. I mean after all it's only a game and there are more pressing issues in the world today to moan about apart from a bad referees' decision, and besides, the ref is always right...even when he's wrong...

A good day all round....